



Palazzo guards are always willing to pose for visitors.

dominion is small, your State is nevertheless one of the most honored in all history. . . wishing that your interesting State may endure and flourish forever. . . Your good friend, Abraham Lincoln."

Stamp collectors, take note

I couldn't leave San Marino without paying my respects to its best-known "institution": postage stamps.

A pioneer in making philatelic history, San Marino has always had a special appeal to many philatelists. It originated the world's first official postal service in 1607 and printed the first-ever charity issues. In addition, in a classic case of overcompensation, this tiny country also issued the world's largest postage stamp.

I recalled how I cherished the few San Marino stamps I had in my boyhood collection. Nostalgically, I wanted to make up for that lack now.

I found a stamp shop and splurged heavily on sets of multi-colored San Marino themes, buying for myself and for every stamp collector I could think of. Eventually, my wife came looking for me; the return bus to Rimini was leaving.

The stamps were the only souvenirs we took away from San Marino — along with an admiration for a serene little republic whose time-honored traditions are still doing nicely in a modern world.

ALBANIA

My uneasiness mounted as the Alitalia DC-9 carried me eastward across the Adriatic Sea en route from Rome to Tirana, capital of Albania. My wife's dire misgivings echoed in my ears. She had declined to accompany me to the little Balkan country.

"Food shortages, water rationing, second-rate hotels. . . You'll have a rough time," she predicted.

Looking back now, she was mostly right. Albania had its hard-

ships. But it had lots, lots more.

The plane was only half full, mostly with Albanians on home visits and European businessmen seeking commercial contacts in the newly emerged democracy. With no other aircraft visible on the Tirana tarmac, tourist traffic seemed thin indeed.

A travel agency representative was to meet me and escort me to a hotel. I knew no one in Albania and very little about this enigmatic country, hermetically sealed off

BEEN THERE? DONE THAT?

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